

Talking Points for the
NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF
TEMPORARY SERVICES

September 18, 1990

GREETING AND INTRODUCTION

- * Talk first about issues of importance to the Subcommittee, then about an issue of special interest to you -- health insurance reform.

BUDGET

- * The big topic in Washington right now is the budget summit. Always a difficult subject, but worse this year because of the ridiculous schedule in store.
- * If Congress is to adjourn on schedule for the elections, it leaves subcommittees like my own very little time to come up with sensible legislation.
- * Worst thing of all, with all the pressures on our health care system, the budget process is just not the way to make rational health policy.

- * In the midst of debt reduction strategies and tax formulas, Congress and the Administration seem to lose sight of the 31 to 37 million Americans with no health insurance. Or that public hospitals are being crushed by the burden of uncompensated care, the AIDS epidemic, and drug abuse. Or that pregnant women and children don't get prenatal and preventive care.
- * So we fight this cut and that reduction, and ignore the system that is crumbling all around us.

LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

- * But while we wait for the final budget agreement, my Subcommittee has been trying to tackle some of those problems we face.
- * Highlights of this year:
(HAW--you might want to elaborate briefly)
- * Nutrition labeling legislation;
- * AIDS counseling and testing, and emergency funding;
- * attempts to strengthen tobacco warning labels;
- * new funds and expansion of the National Health Service Corps.

HEALTH INSURANCE

- * Now let me turn to the issue of health insurance.
- * As you know, I was a member of the Pepper Commission and supported its recommendations on health care reform.
- * The Commission's report will be released next Tuesday (September 25), and I will be sponsoring implementing legislation in the House, which will be introduced as soon as we can get it drafted.
- * Of the three choices available to us -- a Canadian-style reform, an employer-based approach, and tinkering with the current system through Medicaid improvements -- I believe that the only feasible approach is an employer-based approach.
- * The Pepper Commission proposes that all employers, large or small, have to offer a basic package of benefits, or contribute a percentage of their payroll towards a public plan.
- * Health care coverage would become a cost of business for all employers -- no one could undercut the competition by denying coverage to its workers and their families.

- * We all recognize that it would be unreasonable to require employers to offer health insurance without making some major changes in the world of health insurance:
 - Employers need access to basic coverage at an affordable price. This means requiring insurers to offer basic policies without excluding certain people or charging them more money.
 - You need protection against States mandates for additional benefits. This would mean preempting State minimum benefit laws with a uniform Federal basic benefit requirement.

TEMP INDUSTRY CONCERNS

- * Now I know that you are employers unlike other employers, and have special concerns about how mandated benefits would affect your industry.
- * I understand that you have worked with Sen. Kennedy to make his legislation more responsive to your needs.

- * It is unclear right now exactly what the health insurance legislation Congress takes up next year will look like, but I can assure you that I am aware of your concerns and the Senate compromise language. Once we get to the point of detailed discussions, we will be looking for a reasonable accommodation to your concerns.

THE FUTURE OF HEALTH INSURANCE REFORM

- * First of all, nothing is going to happen this year, because there is no money and because the Administration is opposed to any reform.
- * In July, Secretary Sullivan told gave a major policy address in Atlanta in which he rejected the rejected both a Canadian-style approach and an employer-based approach.
- * The Secretary went on at some length about what he was against. He did not say what he was for. The UnderSecretary's Task Force is working on that. But don't hold your breath.

- * If a five-year agreement comes out of the budget summit, the terms of that agreement will basically determine what the next Congress will be able to do on this issue.
- * My own view is that health care reform will come, because our current system, which leaves small businesses and their employees at the mercy of medical underwriting, is not sustainable.
- * And if Congress doesn't act first, you can be sure that the States are going to move on this issue -- and many have already started.
- * My suggestion to you is that if there are proposals out there that you like, make yourselves heard. And if the proposals are not to your liking, be prepared to offer a reasonable alternative. Because the system is not going to fix itself.
- * I look forward to working with you as we develop this reform.